

## Articles and Sermons :: OUR GOSPEL HAS NO TEETH -brown

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### OUR GOSPEL HAS NO TEETH

by Dr. Michael L. Brown

Every year, more than ten thousand believers are being martyred. That's right. More than 10,000 people who proclaim Jesus as Lord are being put to death every year. How can this possibly be? Even if we say that this figure is too high (so me experts claim that it's far too low!); even if it includes believers killed through indiscriminate terrorist attacks, as well as people who were murdered more for political reasons than spiritual reasons; even if there are only one thousand believers being martyred a year, this figure is still astounding to the American Christian mind.

Here in America, if one believer was martyred it would produce an outrage from coast to coast. It would shake up the people of God. It would make the headlines of every newspaper in the country. We'd probably even make a movie about it! It would be a national event.

Then what's the difference between America and Iraq (where Muslims who convert can be killed on the spot), or between our country and Albania (where believers have been sealed in barrels and thrown out to sea)? Why is there virtually no persecution here? It is true that we are different than the Marxist and Islamic nations. Religious liberty for us is a constitutional right. We can evangelize and preach to our heart's content. And we have some godly people in our government. But is the United States a "Christian" nation? Hardly!

We have the highest level of teenage drug abuse in any industrialized nation as well as the highest divorce rate. We are by far the world's largest manufacturer of beer and the third greatest consumer of alcohol per capita. "Christian" America has some of the world's most liberal abortion laws -- we have legally murdered twenty-five million little ones since 1973, now killing forty-two babies for every 100 live births. Organized, public prayer in our schools is against the law, our children's textbooks honor Buddha and Mohammed, and many cynical, sarcastic professors provide our "higher education." The liberal media gives our people the news, and now our grocery stores peddle smut. Magazines which would have been hard to come by a few decades ago because of their sexual content are now placed on check-out counters for our children to see! We are not a "Christian" nation!

We have annual parades celebrating homosexual and lesbian behavior, and not even AIDS has slowed us down. In fact, when one congressman was recently exposed by his male prostitute companion, Congress was hesitant to try to remove him. Why? Because too many other senators were guilty of similar perversions! And all this among the elected officials governing our land, this "one nation under God."

Oh yes -- thank God for America! Our country is one of the greatest countries that has ever existed, and we have so much to give. But remember -- it is not so much Communism or Islam that stands against the gospel -- it is the world. And America is of the world.

Why is it then that God's people suffer virtually no persecution here? Because our gospel has no teeth! It hardly exposes sin in the Body, let alone in the world. How are we shining the light? How are we confronting the world with the righteousness of God? How are we bringing a shaking to our society? Why do we hardly make anyone uncomfortable anymore?

The fact is, when we do poke the devil in the eye by protesting the murder of innocent babies, or by exposing the evils of pornography, the enemy rages and roars. We have dared to invade his guarded territory, and he doesn't like it one bit. But this is the exception, not the rule. The devil is still sitting safe and secure. He sees how ineffectual most of our words and actions are. And he sees how almost all of our ministry endeavors are designed to build up our own lives, not touch the world. Are we merely fattening ourselves for slaughter?

As American believers we have corporately spent hundreds of millions of dollars on our own edification while foreign workers could have evangelized hundreds of millions of their own unreached countrymen with the financial crumbs that fall from our tables. And to add insult to injury, despite all our efforts, our ministry to ourselves has left us inactive, passive, and pathetically comfortable in a fallen, dying society. Is it any wonder that Satan is not afraid of our big talk? It hasn't sh

aken the church. How can it shake the world?

The last few decades have seen a deluge of radio and television ministries. But according to every criterion of decency and morality, our national standard is down. What good has all our preaching done?

Lots of young people want "ministries." They are looking for opportunities to share the Scriptures. Well, there are plenty of street corners throughout our cities in need of young preachers with a message! God knows -- we don't need more ministers serving our connoisseur congregations the latest in gourmet Word! We need to get out where the action is. Then we'll see some results. And then the sparks will fly.

Take an example from the secular world. In 1989, when the United States government began working with Columbia to apprehend and extradite Columbia's big drug dealers, the repercussions were intense. The drug lords responded with wholesale violence -- blowing up planes, murdering newspaper reporters, kidnapping innocent civilians, and bombing police headquarters. Why? Because they were being brought to account; their lifestyle was being threatened.

It is the same with the gospel. When we tell people that they are sinners, and that there is a consequence to their actions; that one day they will be judged for their deeds; that without doubt, a guilty verdict will come -- people get enraged! But when all we say is "Only believe!" -- no repentance, no commitment, no change of life required -- why should there be any offense? How are we holding anyone accountable? How are we convicting them of their sin? We are simply not preaching the whole counsel of God. If we were, with so much media exposure, the American people would be people trembling in their boots!

What if Paul and Peter were alive today and ministering in the United States? Wouldn't they be persecuted? Of course they would! Why? Because they would be a threat to the devil's operation. They would be making trouble for the powers of darkness. And they would be disturbing the ungodly living in sin.

Look at the Book of Acts. The apostles were beaten and stoned by idolaters and imprisoned by hypocritical religious authorities. Why? Because their message was a menace to the kingdom of darkness. It had an adverse effect on business!

Persecution arises when the gospel is a threat to a degenerate, perverted society and a cold, formalistic religious leadership. Good business for the kingdom of God means bad business for the devil. Of this we can rest assured: if we were making real inroads into Satan's empire, we would be feeling his heat. Instead we have become one with the world and one with the religious establishment. That's why we receive virtually no persecution from either.

Paul's message so effected the people of Ephesus that local idol sales dropped sharply. It led to a huge riot in the city because the silversmiths and craftsmen were afraid they would go bankrupt (Acts 19). But today in our great nation we have the strangest of occurrences: "idol sales" and Bible sales are both on the increase. Although lots of people are getting "saved", there doesn't seem to be much less sinning! Our lives are so intertwined with this corrupt world that we can bring no holy standard to it.

When the prophetic priest Girolamo Savonarola preached in Florence five hundred years ago, his message sent shockwaves through the whole city. "His sermons caused such terror and alarm, such sobbing and tears that people passed through the streets without speaking, more dead than alive" as he prophesied coming judgment on the church and the country" (Winkie Pratney, quoting Harold Fischer). And his only weapon was words.

"But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression, to Israel his sin" (Micah 3:8). It was not long before Savonarola was imprisoned, tortured, and executed -- but not until Italy was confronted with the truth. May God give us a whole generation of fire-tongued, brokenhearted, holy men and women of the Spirit, to shatter this world's security by the power of the Word. Oh, for the sharp, piercing sword of truth!

When Stephen accused the religious leaders of his day of being stiff-necked and hardhearted, "they were furious and gnashed their teeth" (Acts 7:54). But today we are making no one mad. Our messages put people to sleep rather than make them weep; they are calculated to win men's praise, not provoke their rage. Who are we confronting today? We have made our peace with the religious system.

We are really not much different than the "dead" church. We go to service on Sunday mornings, attend a mid-week Bible study or prayer meeting, and leave our religion inside the sanctuary doors (if we're serious enough to bring it home

with us, we keep it locked in our houses!). Who in the world would want to persecute us? We are too harmless and mild.

Listen to the fiery words uttered in England by Catherine Booth over one-hundred years ago:

Opposition! It is a bad sign for the Christianity of this day that it provokes so little opposition. If there were no other evidence of it being wrong, I should know from that. When the Church and the world can jog along together comfortably, you may be sure there is something wrong. The world has not altered. Its spirit is exactly the same as it ever was, and if Christians were equally faithful and devoted to the Lord, and separated from the world, living so that their lives were a reproof to all ungodliness, the world would hate them as much as it ever did. It is the Church that has altered, not the world.

How can we argue with this? The Word is perfectly clear:

Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted (2 Tim. 3:12).

If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated Me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: "No servant is greater than his master." If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you also (John 15:18-20).

There is no getting away from the plain sense of these verses: if we were living godly lives in the full sense of the biblical word, we would be persecuted. If we did not belong to the world, just as Jesus did not belong to the world, we would be hated as He was hated. The people of the world today are still rejecting the Son of God. Why aren't they rejecting us?

**Re: OUR GOSPEL HAS NO TEETH -brown - posted by enid, on: 2006/10/17 6:28**

Whose afraid of gums? No bite.

There is no persecution in America or many western nations, because there is nothing to persecute.

Right now I am reading Fox's book of Martyrs.

I tried to read it about 17 years ago. About halfway through, I put the book down. I couldn't take the graphic details of the persecutions, so I stopped reading it.

I picked it up again this year, and put it back down.

Now I have decided to read it to the bitter end.

I still don't like it, but I believe the time is right for me to accept what is written.

It will come our way one day, persecution that is. It might be sooner than we think.

Let's get ready for it, for God's glory alone.

God bless.